

Willard Wirtz
4700 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C. 20008

Senator Jay Rockefeller
U.S. Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 23, 2007

Dear Jay,

I believe this is the first time in 40 years that I have petitioned you as a resident, if only part time, of West Virginia.

I do so because of a very deep concern about the attempt by the Allegheny Power Company to run a high voltage power line across the Cacapon Valley in Hampshire County, close to our place and across a valley which we have come to hold very dear.

You have a meeting scheduled with the Capon Valley Coalition. Suffice it perhaps to say that I join fervently in what they will be saying.

The company is proposing four alternative routes for their new lines. One or two of them run very close to us. Another lies directly beside the 150 year old property of the Capon Springs and Farms Hotel. We have vacationed there for 60 years. I have been a member of its Board, as my sister is now. It has relied uniquely on the ability of the Austin family, who own and operate it, to keep things there just about as they have always been.

All four of the proposed power line routes are highly objectionable. The company's plan is to build towers fifteen stories high and to use the power of eminent domain to gain control of a swath of land several hundred feet wide.

The company already has one power line across the valley. They are apparently maintaining that "homeland security" requires that they have another and that it not parallel the one they already have. I don't believe this can be supported.

We came to this valley 40 years ago because of its tranquil and

quiet beauty. We have tried, like a number of our neighbors, to keep it like it has been. We have voluntarily put a conservation easement on our property so that our 200 acres can never be cut into more than two pieces or put to anything except residential and agricultural uses. At last report the owners of over eight thousand acres, mostly here in Hampshire and Hardy counties, have done the ~~say~~^{same} thing. What the Virginia Power Company is trying to do clearly ignores and violates what we have tried to do.

I don't suppose it matters that these two counties are where George Washington did the heart of his surveying. This was in 1750 and the proposed high voltage routes all cut across the lots he laid out.


I suppose it is just sentimental, too, that Hampshire and Hardy counties were part of the battlefield between the North and the South in the Civil War and that the Power Company's routes probably cut across one or more of the four cemeteries in Hampshire County where hundreds of veterans of that war are buried. Yet it does seem to me that the laws of eminent domain should take something like this into account.

I know that I am only saying what hundreds of people here in this valley feel very, very deeply. We seem helpless against a powerful corporation seeking to misuse the power of eminent domain. It becomes a basic issue of democracy's meaning.

Thank you for whatever you may do to prevent the mandating of a federal issue here by the Secretary of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and for your consideration of our deep feeling about a land we treasure.

I hope it is not inappropriate to ask that you give Sharon my warm regards. What a marvelous job she is doing.

Sincerely,



Willard Wirtz